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MEDIA STATEMENT

OHA Statement on New Report on Ontario Hospitals and Private Staffing Agencies

May 12, 2025, Toronto, ON - "The Ontario Hospital Association (OHA) is continuing to review the report released today by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. It is unclear as to whether the figures and analysis provided are specific to only agency staff usage or if they also include a broader category of services that have already been contracted out and not performed by existing hospital staff in some hospitals, such as cleaning, laundry, food services, security, and logistics support services. It is also not clear whether total hospital compensation costs are fully represented, as the numbers provided may not represent the full scope of expenses, including pension and benefits.

Since 2019, hospitals have hired more than 40,000 new health care workers, growing the total hospital workforce to more than 280,000 in size, excluding physicians. Hospitals have hired an additional 7,500 registered nurses since 2019, which is an increase of 10 per cent. Over the same period, hospitals hired an additional 5,600 registered practical nurses, an increase of 26 per cent. Today, there are more acute care beds and health care workers in Ontario's hospitals than there were prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Agency usage at the provincial level is still only a small portion of total nursing hours worked and the distribution of those hours across regions and hospital types is varied. While there has been overall growth in agency nurse usage, the total number of hours worked by all Registered Nurses (RNs) in Ontario hospitals has also substantially increased due to growing demands on the health care system.

Ontario hospitals are doing everything possible to meet the needs of the people of Ontario while delivering the highest quality of care. In recent years, the OHA has been working closely with the Government of Ontario to address the workforce challenges facing the province and to reduce reliance on agency nursing. Agency nurses are primarily used as a last resort to alleviate staffing challenges and to maintain continued access to the highest quality of care. The decision to do so is made very judiciously given the cost, continuity of care, and impact on staff morale. Hospitals in smaller, rural and northern communities continue to face unique and multi-faceted staffing challenges due to their size and have a greater need for staffing agency solutions.

Ontario hospitals are continuing to reduce their reliance on staffing agencies and will continue to work closely with the Government of Ontario to strengthen its workforce by providing stable, in-house staffing solutions to meet patient care needs."

- Kirk LeMessurier, Chief of Communications and Public Affairs, Ontario Hospital Association

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Ontario Hospital Association
Established in 1924, the OHA serves as the voice of the province's public hospitals, supporting them through advocacy, knowledge translation and member engagement, labour relations, and data and analytics with the goal of helping hospitals build a better health system. The OHA is also attuned to the broader strategic questions facing the future of the province's health care system and we work to ensure Ontario's hospitals have a voice in shaping this longer-term vision.

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